

ABSTRACT

Pregnancy-associated glycoproteins (PAGs) are structurally related to the pepsins, thought to be restricted to the hoofed (ungulate) mammals and characterized by being expressed specifically in the outer epithelial cell layer (chorion/trophectoderm) of the placenta. By cloning expressed genes from ovine and bovine placental cDNA libraries, the inventors estimate that cattle, sheep, and most probably all ruminant Artiodactyla, possess possibly 100 or more PAG genes, many of which are placentally expressed. The PAGs are highly diverse in sequence, with regions of hypervariability confined largely to surface-exposed loops. Selected PAG that are products of the invasive binucleate cells, expressed highly in early pregnancy at the time of trophoblast invasion and expressed weakly, if at all, in late gestation are useful in the early diagnosis of pregnancy. In a preferred embodiment, the invention relates to immunoassays for detecting these PAGs.